THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) and (b) *details of emissaries*

Shri Jaswant Singh, Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, utilised the opportunity provided by his visit to New York in connection with the UN Special Session on Durga, to interact with NRIs, media, NGOs and academics in the United States. He also meet Strobe Talbot, Acting Secretary of State and Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations. Smt. Vasundhara Raje, MOS (EA), visited Hanoi, Manila and Singapore. Smt. Vasundhara Raje held meetings with President Estrada and Foreign Minister Siazon in Manila, Ambassador Tommy Koh and Foreign Minister Jayakumar in Singapore and, held a substantive meeting in Hanoi with Deputy Prime Minister (Foreign Minister) Nguyan Manh Cam. Shri Brajesh Mishra, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, visited Paris, London and Moscow. In London, Shri Mishra called on Prime Minister Tony Blair, in Paris he called on President Jacques Chirac and in Moscow he called on Prime Minister Kiriyenko. Shri Nareshwar Dayal, Secretary (MEA) visited Abu dhabi, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait and Bahrain. Shri Dayal held meetings at the senior official level in the capitals he visited.

Outcome of the visit by the Special Envoys

Prime Minister's Special Envoys were received at high levels in all the capitals. While there was an appreciation of the security context India was situated in, there were expressions of concern, particularly from the Western countries, who saw the tests as undermining their attempts at instituting a global non-profileration regime. The visits by Prme Minister's Special Envoys have ensured a greater understanding of India's rationals for undertaking the nuclear tests and presented a valuable opportunity to explain the various initiatives announced by Government in the wake of the tests.

U.S. and Foreign Commercial Service Office at Hyderabad

2504 SHRI K.M. SAIFULLAH: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Andhra Pradesh Government has requested to accord clearance for the establishment of a US and foreign commercial service office at Hyderabad; and

(b) if so, the action taken to accord early clearance?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The US Government had requested opening Foreign Commercial Services Offices in some Indian cities including Hyderabad. Decisions in respect of opening such offices in Bangalore, Pune and Ahmedabad have already been conveyed.

Offer of mediatory role by Bangladesh Prime Minister

2505. SHRI AMAR SINGH:
SHRI VAYALAR RAVI:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Prime Minister of Bangladesh had recently visited our country and held discussions with the Prime Minister;

(b) if so, what are the details of discusison; and

(c) whether it is a fact that Mrs. Hasina has offered to play a mediatory role in Indo-Pak negotiations during the course of her meeting and if so, the details thereof and Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) and (b) The Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina, paid a working visit to New Delhi on 16 June 1998 and

held discussions with the Prime Minister. The talks covered bilateral relations, regional and international matters.

Both sides agreed on the need to intensify the excellent relations that exist between the two neighbouring countries, to increase exchanges at various levels including Parliamentary delegations, students and cultural groups and to step up commercial and economic interaction. Border and security-related issues were reviewed. Both sides reiterated their commitment to SAARC in view of the important role it could play in promoting regional cooperation.

(c) No, Sir.

Rationale of Negotiating Kashmir Issue with Pakistan

2506. SHRI PARAG CHALIHA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government's declared stand on Kashmir is that it is an integral part of India; and

(b) if so, what is the rationale of negotiating Kashmir issue with Pakistan, as announced recently by the Prime Minister?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) and (b) The State of Jammu & Kashmir is an integral part of the Indian Union. A part of the territory of the State is under the illegal and forcible occupation of Pakistan. India is committed to resolution of all outstanding issues with Pakistan, including its continuing occupation of a part of the territories of the State of J&K, through peaceful means and bilateral discussions.

Border Trade with Bangladesh

2507. SHRI KHAGEN DAS: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal sent by North-Eastern States for facilitating border trade with Bangladesh;

(b) if so, what steps have been taken by Government in this regard; and

(c) the reaction of Government of Bangladesh to this proposal?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) Yes Sir.

(b) and (c) At the 5th Indo-Bangladesh Joint Economic Commission (JEC) meeting in March 1997, both sides discussed the question of trade in local produce between areas in India and Bangladesh at selected points contiguous to the border between the two countries and agreed to set up a group of experts to examine and make recommendations on the modalities of border trade.

Meeting of Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan at SAARC Summit

2508. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Indian Prime Minister has expressed the desire to meet his Pakistan counterpart on the side-lines of the SAARC Summit, scheduled to be held in Colombo in July, 1998 and also called upon him to step forward, before the summit meet, for a fruitful and sustained dialogue on a whole array of bilateral issues, including Kashmir as reported in the Hindustan Times dated 23 June, 1998, and

(b) if so, whether Pakistan has agreed to talk in the spirit of the Simla Agreement signed between the two countries in 1972 indicating the date and venue?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) and (b) Prime Minister wrote to the Prime Minsiter of Pakistan on 14 June, 1998 reiterating India's commitment to fostering a peaceful and friendly relationship, and developing a stable structure of cooperation between India and Pakistan. In his letter, Prime Minister also convey-